Remarks

Claims 1 to 10 and 12 to 21 are pending in the application. Claims 1 through 10 are amended from the original claims, and claims 12 to 21 are new.

Claims 6 and 7 were found to be allowable if rewritten to overcome the §112 rejections discussed below and if rewritten into independent claim format including all of the elements of their respective base claims. Appropriate amendments have been made, and these claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 1 to 5, and 8 to 11 were rejected, as discussed below.

Initially, it is noted that claims 1 to 10 are generally directed to link plates, and that claims 12 to 21 are directed to energy guide chains made up of such link plates. Claim 11 had been dependent from claim 1 and was directed to a chain, but that claim has been canceled in favor of new claim 12 and its related dependent claims.

The examiner indicated at page 2 of the action that the specification should be reviewed to obviate any possible minor translation errors. In response, appropriate amendments have been made to correct obvious errors and delete references to specific claims. A substitute specification is filed herewith. No new matter has been added by the amendments to the specification.

Next, the examiner rejected the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, because the claims included terminology that the examiner found awkward. Claim 1 has been amended to address the specific concerns listed by the examiner at page 2 of the action. These amendments are believed to traverse the §112 rejections, and no new matter has been added. Further, these amendments are not believed to have narrowed the claim scope in any respect.

Claims 1 to 4, and 8 to 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by EP 0 856 683 ("EP '683") because the examiner believes that EP '683 teaches the elements of

the claimed invention in Figs. 1 to 3 including link plates, overlap regions, and a central region 2 with at least two stop faces. Regarding claim 9, the examiner believes that faces 30 have a concave profile and faces 55/6 have concave faces as claim 9 recites.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the examiner's interpretation of EP '683 because there is no disclosure of first and second overlap regions around a central region, and a stop face in each of the outer regions. The two stop faces 5/6 of EP '683 are disposed on a first overlap region. The second overlap region includes stop faces 30/32. EP '683 fails to disclose a link plate having two overlap regions, whereby each region has a central region surrounded by two outer regions in which stop faces are arranged.

The examiner also rejected claims 1 to 5 and 8 to 11 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by DE 3 837 762 ("DE '764") because the examiner believes that DE '764 discloses in Figs. 1 and 3 link plates 10 having overlap regions generally at each end with a central region 100/102 and at least two stop faces 20/22/24. The examiner next asserts that the third region recited in claim 5 is met by members 110/112. With respect to claim 9, the examiner asserts that faces 32/34/36 have concave profiles and that faces 20/22/24 are concave.

Again, Applicants respectfully disagree with the examiner's interpretation of DE '764 because it fails to disclose a central region surrounded by first and second outer regions, each having a stop face thereon. DE '764 discloses only a single outer region, and thus it fails to disclose the recited claimed inventions.

The benefits of these various regions and their relative disposition to one another are described throughout the specification, but are specifically mentioned at Page 3, para. 10 as being the ability to separate the functions of the stops in each of the outer regions as well as to simplify and reduce costs of manufacturing. For example, by using two outer regions with stops

spaced differently in each region, the orientation of related links can be different depending upon which direction the chain is bent. Prestressing a chain made up of the links is also possible to help carry live weights with the energy guide chain. (Page 3, para. 11.) These functions are not recognized by the cited references.

In addition, neither reference relied upon by the examiner discloses stop faces spaced irregularly relative to one another so that the angular position of an energy guide chain composed of such link plates will be different depending upon the pivoting direction (claims 2 and 13); a plurality of stop faces arranged to provide prestressing of an energy link chain composed of such link plates (claims 3 and 14); a link plate having a second outer region has stop faces defining a radius of curvature in a transition region between a lower trunk and an upper trunk of an energy guide chain composed of such links (claims 4 and 15); or spring elastic surface on a stop joined to the central region (claims 5 and 16).

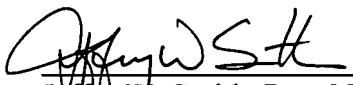
Further, because both cited references fail to disclose a central region surrounded by first and second outer regions as discussed above, they also do not disclose a concentric relationship between the central and outer regions as recited in claims 8 and 19.

Also, as suggested by the allowance of claim 6, nothing in the cited references discloses stops that are v-shaped in cross-section (claim 17); or as suggested by the allowance of claim 7, stops of materials having differing hardnesses (claim 18). Therefore, in addition to not being anticipated as stated above with respect to independent claims 1 and 12, the dependent claims are allowable for these additional reasons.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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